

7-001 1966 Paris Congress Letter

c/o Brian Richardson
Greenways
Knockholt
near Sevenoaks
Kent
England

August 24th., 1966

My dear Vanko !

After taking ship from Dublin to Liverpool and driving across England, we are now living in our caravan as illegal "squatters" on land belonging to Lord Stanhope, arch-enemy of the Gypsy people here in Kent.

We are now nearer to you in France than we are to Ireland.

Let us know what date you wish us to join in in France to assist in the publicity and other arrangements for the meeting. I have not heard anything about the Press work yet, but it is early.

We have made arrangements for John Connors, a member of the National Committee of the Travellers Community in Ireland, to attend the meeting. He will arrive at Le Boughet at 8.15 p.m. on Saturday, October 8th. I hope this is satisfactory. He is from about the best-known travelling family and plays the tin whistle (he has made disc recordings) and has spoken well at public meetings.

It is a question of money whether Tom Clarke and John Gray come but we need not worry about this at the moment. Isaac Lovell will perhaps come from Northern Ireland.

Here in Kent several Gypsy people are interested and I hope for one or two representatives will be able to come. There is a young man Soli Brown (27) who is one of the best local leaders and helped to win the camping site at Star Lane, Bromley. We are hoping he will start another "direct action" campaign this coming winter near here and we will be working with him.

As everywhere, there is the problem of finding good leaders. We hope that the meeting in France will encourage and stimulate our people to organise themselves and put their case to the public and the authorities.

The Gypsy and travelling people here and in Ireland understand the meeting to be a "world Gypsy parliament" which will unite all travellers, produce a French and English newspaper (La Voix) and bring the help of gadjo outsiders such as lawyers and "civil rights" workers.

During the coming winter I will make contact with as many travellers as possible in the London region and hope that some kind of organisation will emerge. When Venni has been to college she hopes to encourage the establishment of kindergarten schools for the small children, based on Montessori principles.

Much love to yourself and family
and to everyone with you,

Grattan

PS I had a letter from
Jean Dauvergne saying
your brother had been invited
in Paris for the meeting.

I have just read
Norman Dodd's books
"Gypsies, didikais
and other travellers."